



Backpacking

Death Valley National Park



◆ Fill out a free Backcountry Camping Permit available at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center or ranger stations at Stovepipe Wells and Beatty.

◆ Solo hikers: let a friend or family member know where you are going and your estimated time of return.

◆ Camp at least 2 miles from any paved or maintained dirt road and 100 yards from water sources. See Backcountry Camping handout for details.

◆ Most of the hikes are cross-country routes. Maps are necessary and can be purchased at the visitor center.

◆ Mountain trails are the only hikes recommended in summer due to the extreme heat at lower elevations.

◆ Bring a minimum of 1 gallon of water per person a day. Do not rely on springs; they may be dry or contaminated.

1 Indian Pass

Difficulty: moderately strenuous
Type of hike: no trail; walk gravel wash and cross-country.

Distance: 6 miles to springs; 8 miles to pass.

Elevation gain: 3000 feet to pass

Water: yes, in canyon

Start: 6.5 miles north of Furnace Creek Visitor Center on Hwy 190.

Vehicle needed: all vehicles

Maps: Nevares Peak 7.5 minute topo

Comments: Follow wash bearing left (north) staying in drainage nearest ridge; head for low pass in mountains to the east. Last four miles in canyon. No camping within 2 miles of the road or 200 yards from springs.

2 Hole-in-the-Wall

Difficulty: moderate to strenuous

Type of hike: no trail; gravel wash and cross-country

Distance: 2 to 10 miles

Elevation gain: 300 to 1500 feet

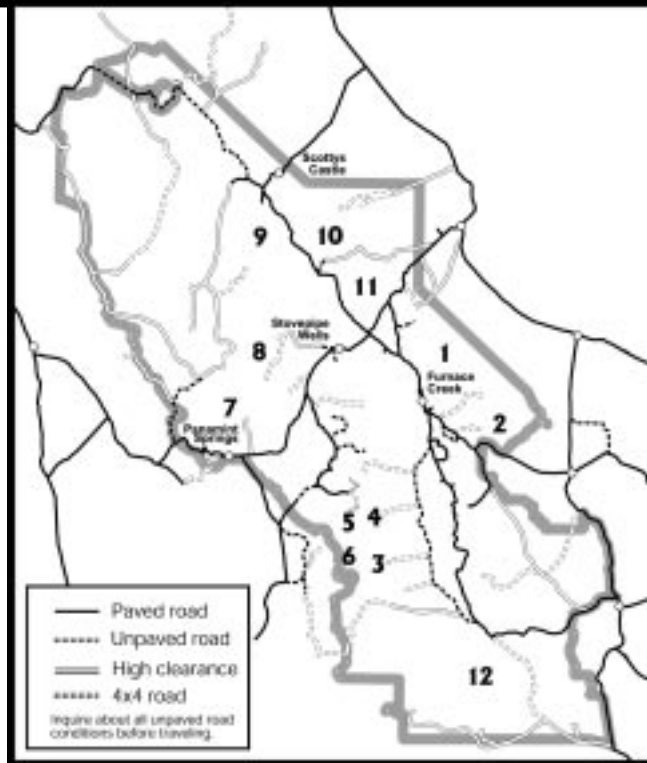
Water: no

Start: Hole-in-the-Wall

Vehicle needed: high-clearance to Hole-in-the-Wall; 4x4 beyond

Maps: Echo Canyon 7.5 minute topo

Comments: Many variations possible. In the large "amphitheater" between Schaub and Pyramid Peaks many small side canyons make good loop hikes by crossing low divides and returning via another canyon. Several rugged canyons in Funeral Mountains just above Hole-in-the-Wall can be explored depending on your climbing ability. No camping within 2 miles of the paved road.



4 Hanaupah Canyon

Difficulty: moderately strenuous
Type of hike: walk 4x4 road and gravel wash

Distance: 3 miles to spring in south fork

Elevation gain: 2200 feet to spring

Water: yes

Start: park at top of alluvial fan, 5 miles up Hanaupah Canyon Rd.

Vehicle needed: high-clearance to mouth of canyon; 4x4 needed beyond

Maps: Telescope Peak and Hanaupah Canyon 7.5 minute topos

Comments: At top of alluvial fan, the road drops into the rocky wash and becomes 4x4. Walk to the road end then continue up canyon to the old mining area and spring.

3 Hungry Bill's Ranch

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

Type of hike: informal path and cross-country.

Distance: 2 miles to ranch site from road end; 7 miles to Panamint City.

Elevation gain: 1100 feet to ranch site; 4100 feet to pass

Water: yes

Start: end of Johnson Canyon Road

Vehicle needed: high-clearance to canyon mouth; 4x4 on last 4 miles to road end

Maps: Panamint and Galena Canyon 7.5 minute topos

Comments: Historic ranch site from 1870's contains rock terraces, corral and orchard. It is possible to continue over pass (no trail) to ghost town of Panamint City.



5 Telescope Peak

Difficulty: strenuous

Type of hike: maintained trail

Distance: 7 miles to summit

Elevation gain: 3000 feet

Water: no

Start: Mahogany Flat Campground

Vehicle needed: High-clearance

Maps: Telescope Peak 7.5 minute topo

Comments: Spectacular views of Death Valley and Sierra Nevada. Camping is good in Arcan Meadows between Rogers Peak and Telescope Peak. Grade is steep for last mile of ascent; ice axe and crampons are often necessary in winter. No camping within 2 miles of the road.

6 Surprise Canyon

Difficulty: strenuous

Type of hike: wet canyon with remnants of old jeep road, some rock scrambling.

Distance: 5 miles to ghost town

Elevation gain: 4000 feet to ghost town

Water: yes

Start: 6 miles northeast of Ballarat.

Vehicle needed: high-clearance; 4x4 final 2 miles to trailhead

Maps: Panamint and Ballarat 7.5 minute topos

Comments: Old jeep road washed out in 1980s and officially closed to vehicles but makes a great hiking trail. Ghost town of Panamint City is a good goal but mountain scenery, abundant springs and bighorn sheep all make it a worthy hike. Another 7 miles of mostly trailless hiking over pass leads to Johnson Canyon Road.

7 Panamint Dunes

Difficulty: moderate

Type of hike: no trail; cross-country

Distance: 3 miles to dunes

Elevation gain: 1000 feet

Water: no

Start: 5 miles north of Hwy 190 on unmarked dirt road leading past Lake Hill.

Vehicle needed: high-clearance

Maps: Dunes 7.5 minute topo or Trails Illustrated Map of Death Valley

Comments: Hike across the gently rising upper end of Panamint Valley to star-shaped dunes. These remote dunes are more impressive than they look from a

distance. Military jets often use Panamint Valley to practice low elevation flight maneuvers, but are less likely on weekends

8 Cottonwood-Marble Canyon Loop

Difficulty: strenuous

Type of hike: walk dirt road; no trail; gravel wash and cross-country; some brushy areas.

Distance: 26 mile loop

Elevation gain: 3000 feet

Water: yes in upper Cottonwood Canyon and Deadhorse Canyon.

Start: 8 miles from Stovepipe Wells on Cottonwood Canyon Road

Vehicle needed: high-clearance to canyon mouth; 4x4 beyond

Maps: East of Sand Flat, Cottonwood Canyon, and Harris Hill 7.5 minute topos

Comments: Hike the loop by following the main dirt road to its end, then continue up the Cottonwood drainage. Below the spring, trees line a small stream but brush can be thick. In the valley above the spring, hike northeast to cross over into Deadhorse Canyon and follow it down into Marble Canyon to return to your vehicle. Potential flash flood hazard.

9 Bighorn Gorge

Difficulty: strenuous

Type of hike: no trail; walk gravel wash and cross-country, some rock scrambling.

Distance: 10 miles from Scotty's Castle Road to upper dry fall

Elevation gain: 4000 feet

Water: no

Start: 3.9 miles south of Grapevine Ranger Station on Scotty's Castle Road.

Vehicle needed: all vehicles

Maps: Tin Mountain and Whitetop Mountain 7.5 minute topos

Comments: From the Scotty's Castle Road, hike down to Death Valley Wash then follow main drainage up alluvial fan to canyon. Several small dry falls are easily passed, but at upper end of gorge an 80 foot dry fall requires scrambling up talus slope on north side to continue beyond. No camping within 2 miles of the road.

10 Fall Canyon

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

Type of hike: informal path first mile, then gravel wash and rock scrambling.

Distance: 3 miles to first dry fall; 6 miles to second dry fall.

Elevation gain: 1400 feet to first dry fall

Water: no

Start: parking area at mouth of Titus Canyon (west end)

Vehicle needed: all vehicles

Maps: Fall Canyon 7.5 minute topo

Comments: Narrow canyon with high walls, similar to Titus. From parking area, hike north along base of mountains ½ mile to large wash, then up into Fall Canyon. At 3 miles you reach a dry fall, which can be passed on the south side with moderate difficulty. Day-use is heavy below dry falls. Backpackers should plan on camping beyond that point. No camping within 2 miles of the road.

11 Titanother Canyon

Difficulty: moderately strenuous

Type of hike: no trail; walk gravel wash and cross-country.

Distance: 4.5 miles to Lostman Spring; 12 miles to Scotty's Castle Road.

Elevation loss: 1700 down to spring; 4700 feet down to road

Water: maybe, at Lostman Spring

Start: 11 miles from start of Titus Canyon Road (do not block road)

Vehicle needed: High-clearance

Maps: Thimble Peak 7.5 minute topo

Comments: With a 2-car shuttle you can hike all the way through to Scotty's Castle Road, but a more practical way is to hike to Lostman Spring and return to your car. No camping within 2 miles of the road or 100 yards from springs.

12 Owlshead Mountains

Difficulty: moderate

Type of hike: cross-country and gravel wash

Distance: 7 miles to upper Through Cyn, 16 mile loop to return via Granite Canyon

Elevation gain: 1900 feet

Water: no

Start: Confidence Mill site, 6.6 miles from Ashford Junction on Harry Wade Road

Vehicle needed: high-clearance

Maps: Confidence Hills East and Confidence Hills West 7.5 minute topo.

Comments: The east side of the Owlshead Mountains have several nice canyons for hikers to explore. Through Canyon is one of the largest and passes through to a hidden basin at the heart of the mountains. The only known stand of smoke trees in the park are found here. A possible loop trip is return via Granite Canyon.

Use Leave No Trace
outdoor ethics when
hiking or camping.
For more info visit:
www.Int.org